

People's Reporter

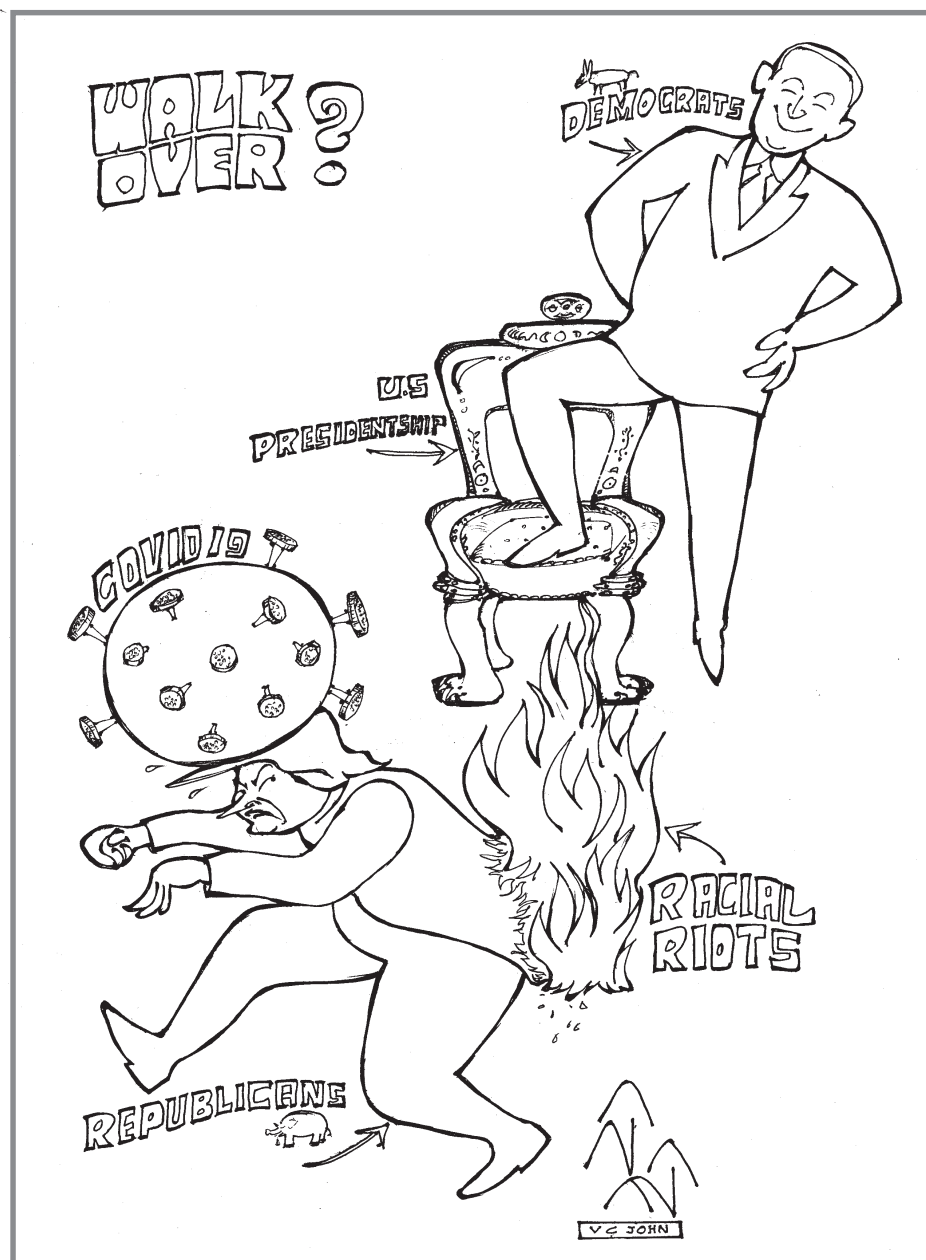
A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Migrant Workers in India

Victims of anti-poor policy in the COVID-19 times

George Mathew

After 70 years, India, the 'Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic', has become a country at which internationally, leaders, thinkers and people are looking, with sorrow and sympathy.

The tragic episodes of migrant labour-families in the various states raise questions about our future.

When lockdown was declared on 24 March 2020, there was no thinking, planning, consultation or economic and social assessment of its implications. We all in India had to, and still continue to, pass through difficult times but the worst sufferers are the migrant workers in India. Why were they totally ignored and marginalised? That is a question everybody is asking today.

As per the government of India estimate (2016), we have more than 50 crore workforce. Out of that, the majority are migrant labourers from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and North Eastern states amounting to 45.36 crores or 37 per cent of the country's population. When these workers move to

other states, they have with them their family and most of them are daily wage earners. When without any notice, their work is gone what will they do? Did our leaders and decision workers think about it? No.

Almost all migrant workers decided to go back home with their parents, wives, children when they knew that factories and all places of work were closed and they would have no jobs. But they had no means- no money, no transport, no help - to reach their homes in distant states. In the process, a large number of them lost their lives.

What is the result today? After 70 years, India the 'Socialist, Secular, Democratic

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Fourth World Day of the Poor

Message of Pope Francis

"Stretch forth your hand to the poor"

"Stretch forth your hand to the poor" (Sir 6:7). Age-old wisdom has proposed these words as a sacred rule to be followed in life. Today these words remain as timely as ever. They help us fix our gaze on what is essential and overcome the barriers of indifference. Poverty always appears in a variety of guises, and calls for attention to each particular situation.

In all of these, we have an opportunity to encounter the Lord Jesus, who has revealed himself as present in the least of his brothers and sisters. (Mtt. 25:40). "

In his message published on June 13, for 'The World Day for the Poor', the Pope Francis said, "The coronavirus pandemic has revealed poverty that we cannot ignore. This pandemic arrived suddenly and caught us unprepared, sparking a powerful sense of bewilderment and helplessness. This has made us all the more aware of the presence of the poor in our midst and their need for help. Generosity that supports the weak, consoles the afflicted, relieves suffering and restores dignity to those stripped of it, is a condition for a fully human life."

The World Day for the Poor is celebrated this year on November 15.

Pope Francis said, "Time devoted to prayer can never become an alibi for neglecting our neighbor in need. Prayer to God and solidarity with the poor and suffering are inseparable."

Excerpts from the Message

1. Let us take up the Old Testament book of Sirach, in which we find the words of a sage who lived some two hundred years before Christ. He sought out the wisdom that makes men and women better and more capable of insight into the affairs of life. He did this at a time of severe testing for the people of Israel, a time of suffering, grief and poverty due to the domination of foreign powers. As a man of great faith, rooted in the traditions of his forebears, his first thought was to turn to God and to beg from him the gift of

wisdom. The Lord did not refuse his help.

From the book's first pages, its author presents his advice concerning many concrete situations in life, one of which is poverty. He insists that even amid hardship we must continue to trust in God: "Do not be alarmed when disaster comes. Cling to him and do not leave him, so that you may be honoured at the end of your days. Whatever happens to you, accept it, and in the uncertainties of your humble state, be patient, since gold is tested in the fire, and chosen men in the furnace of humiliation. Trust him and he will uphold you, follow a straight path and hope in him. You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy; do not turn aside in case you fall" (2:2-7).

2. In page after page, we discover a precious compendium of advice on how to act in the light of a close relationship with God, creator and lover of creation, just and provident towards all his children. This constant reference to God, however, does not detract from a concrete consideration of mankind. On the contrary, the two are closely connected.

This is clearly demonstrated by the passage from which the theme of this year's Message is taken (cf. 7:29-36). Prayer to God and solidarity with the poor and the suffering, are inseparable. In order to perform an act of worship acceptable to the Lord, we have to recognize that each person, even the

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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

The more civilised, the more racist?

The murder of Mr. George Floyd, a 46-year old African-American by a police officer, crushing the victim's neck with his knee in Minneapolis on 25 May, reveals the fact that racial crimes against the Blacks in the US have not ended. It is, really, alarming that despite very strong, massive protests in the US and across the world against this racial brutality, another police officer in Atlanta gunned down Mr. Rayshard Brooks, a 27-year old Black American, on 14 June. The persistence of racial discrimination against the Blacks in the minds of some Whites is one thing, and the killing of unarmed Black people by the White police men, now and then, is another thing. In the US, while the Blacks constitute only 13 per cent of the population, 27 per cent of the people being killed by the police are Black people. Persistence of this institutional crime should become a matter of grave concern.

The reforming of the police and the penal code is suggested to address these criminal acts. It should be attempted but one should not expect it as the real cure for the deep-rooted ill in the psyche of the people. It can be prevented only by probing and addressing the basic reasons for these cruel acts. The progress of human civilization, it is hoped, would transform the human beings to consider 'others' as equals. Education, democracy and increasing influence of science, are considered as the pillars of civilization. Compared to other countries, these pillars are considered to be stronger in the US. The US claims that she is a God-fearing country. Because of all these, the US ought to make her citizens enlightened enough to respect other people as equals. But unfortunately, what we see today is that the more the people become scientific/rational, educated, democratic and God-fearing, the more the people go back to the Dark Ages.

The whole humanity has the same lineage and in a strict sense, there is only one race, the human race. Education ought to enlighten the people and to eliminate the space for racist thinking. Knowledge of history ought to be a major ingredient of education. The White People in the US ought to remember the history of the US, especially her economic history. Whereas in almost all other countries, extortion of rent and usury were the sources for capital accumulation, in the US its source was the blood and sweat of the Black Slaves who were used first in the plantations, and subsequently for constructing the railways. These were the sources of pre-capitalist accumulation. The number of slaves in the US increased from 700,000 in 1790 to 2500,000 in 1840 and to 3200,000 in 1850. Some of the descendants of the slave-masters who became rich, continue to ill-treat the descendants of the slaves even today forgetting the fact that it is the fore-fathers of the latter who made them rich!

The US is a democractic country but it is a country of racial crimes too. The US is a nation that hails God, perhaps more than many other countries. It must be noted that the US is the only country that carries the words "In God we trust" on her currency. The fear of God ought to make the people realize that all the people in the world are the children of the one Parent God. Therefore, all people should treat all others as brothers and sisters. But, it is a big irony that the US that boasts as the guardian angel of democracy and human rights, is, still, a land of racial crimes. We have to examine the reasons behind this paradox and to become truly civilized, educated, scientific, democratic and God-fearing.

Thought for the Fortnight

*The smallest good deed is better than
the grandest good invention*

– Duguet

The Gospel of Mary!

Satish C. Gyan

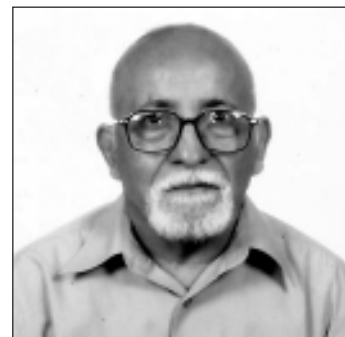
“ Basing on the findings of the scholars of ancient and classical languages Karen points out that the Gospel of Mary was written in the second century C.E. It disappeared from the scene until it resurfaced in 1896. It was in January of that year that a fifth century manuscript of the Gospel was purchased by Dr. Carl Reinhardt, a German scholar, who happened to be in a Antiquities Market in Cairo, Egypt. When a dealer in antiquities showed him an old manuscript written in Coptic language belonging to 5th century C.E., he bought it. Reinhardt brought it to Germany and got it placed in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. ”

Very few of us Christians would have heard of the Gospel of Mary, let alone read it. It was a pleasant surprise when our son, Akshay, whom we were visiting in the USA, gifted me a copy of The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and The First Woman Apostle by Karen L. King, 2003, Polebridge Press, USA. I read and re-read the Gospel of Mary with interest.

The texts of the Gospel give a new understanding and meaning of the teachings of Jesus. It gives a feeling to persons like me that one is treading the Upanishadic religious-philosophical territory. The commentaries by Karen King, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard University Divinity School, Boston, USA, are a great help in understanding the social, religious, political and cultural environment within which the Jesus Movement was born and the message of Jesus spread and about the leadership struggle within the early church.

Here is a reflection by a Christian activist and theological educator.

Mary of Magdala was one of those women disciples who ministered Jesus and his disciples and provided financial assistance to his preaching mission and ministry. She, along with other women, dared visit the grave where the dead body of Jesus was placed. They wondered as to, "Who will roll away the stone." (Mk. 16:3) To their surprise the stone was already rolled away. An angel of God informs them, "He is not here, but has risen." (Matt. 28:7) All leave the place but Mary stays back. Jesus reveals himself to her calling her by her name, Mary, and asks her to go and inform his disciples that he is going to Galilee ahead of them. (Jn. 20: 16-17; Mt. 28: 10) Mary goes and announces to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" and tells them what Jesus had asked her to tell them. (Jn. 20: 18) **In essence, the Risen Jesus makes her the first Woman Apostle! That is, one who is being sent on a mission!**



The Rev. Dr. Satish C. Gyan is former Principal of Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, and former General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement of India

Jesus was born and raised in a Jewish peasant family. He began to preach about the Realm of God, Kingdom of God, in a male centred, male dominated, male ruled, and male controlled Jewish society and religion in particular and society in general. **Yet, he ensured that women were in his band of disciples, were not left behind to tending the needs of menfolk only but also shared responsibilities. They were part of his team though their names are not mentioned in the list of disciples.** (Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 3: 13-19; Lk. 6: 12-16) Sadly enough, the Gospel-writers who are all male, failed to do justice to female disciples of their Guru, Jesus. In this respect, the Gospel of Mary, with Karen's insightful commentary, is a bombshell and a critique of the religion of Jesus propounded and promoted by his ecclesia, its leadership and the followers of the Risen Lord.

Basing on the findings of the scholars of ancient and classical languages Karen points out that the Gospel of Mary was written in the second century C.E. **It disappeared from the scene until it resurfaced in 1896.** It was in January of that year that a fifth century manuscript of the Gospel was purchased by Dr. Carl Reinhardt, a German scholar, who happened to be in a Antiquities Market in Cairo, Egypt. When a dealer in antiquities showed him an old manuscript written in Coptic language belonging to 5th century C.E., he bought it. (Introduction p.3). Reinhardt brought it to Germany and got it placed in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin.

Incidentally, it also contained hitherto unknown works: the Apocryphon of John, the Sophia of Jesus Christ and the Acts of Peter, (Introd. p. 7). Later, in 1917, a small fragment of the Gospel of Mary, belonging to third century written in Greek language, was found in Egypt (Introd. P. 9). Incidentally, another manuscript was found in the village of Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945, (pp. 10). And another Greek fragment of the Gospel of Mary was discovered and published in 1983. **Thus, there are two Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mary belonging to the third cent., C.E., and one Coptic manuscript of the Gospel of Mary belonging to the fifth cent. C.E.** Strange, as it may appear, texts of other early Christian writings were copied and recopied except the Gospel of Mary, after fifth century C.E. (p. 12).

The Gospel of Mary provides a "radical interpretation of Jesus' teachings as a path for inner spiritual knowledge; rejects his suffering and death as the path to eternal life; it exposes the erroneous view that Mary of Magdala was a prostitute;... presents arguments ...for the legitimacy of women leadership...it challenges our views about the harmony and unanimity among the first Christians and it asks us to rethink the basis for church authority." (Intr. 3-4)

The Gospel contains the message Mary received in a vision of the Risen Lord which seemingly appears to be a critique of the teachings being propounded and promoted by the early ecclesia, its leadership and the followers of the Risen Lord. The message, by and large, is in a dialogical form. Mary's claim to have seen the Lord in a vision carries the stamp of post resurrection appearances of Jesus presented by the four Gospel and the Acts. All these books inform that Jesus asks his disciples to go and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, God's Realm. The same subject matter is also available in Mary's Gospel focusing on Saviour's teachings as revealed to her.

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Migrant Workers in India

Victims of anti-poor policy in the COVID-19 times

Who will unmask the truth?

>>> **Contd. from Page 1 Col. 2**

Republic', has become a country at which internationally, leaders, thinkers and people are looking, with sorrow and sympathy. The tragic episodes of migrant labour-families in the states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi borders and in many other states raise questions about our future.

The migrant labour-tragedies have brought some stories of our people's ability to face the threatening situation as well. Take the case of Jyoti from Dharbhanga, Bihar. Father of this 15 year old girl, Class VII student in Delhi, was an autorikshaw driver and he lost his

her father as pillion rider. They saw hundreds of migrants walking on the highways. Yes, we have such brave hearted young generation in India and that is our future and we must believe that "we shall overcome".

While there are many courageous social warriors, organisations and enlightened citizens who are coming forward to save the lives of the victims of this disaster, the question remains: why there is no structural change happening in India?

While there are many courageous social warriors, organisations and enlightened citizens who are coming forward to save the lives of the victims of this disaster, the question remains: why there is no structural change happening in India?



Dr. George Mathew is the Chairman of the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi

COVID Pandemic came what

only a few Shramik special trains, police lathicharges etc.

But there is one state which is an exception. That is Kerala which has 20.81 lakh migrant workers employed in the state, one of the largest sections in the country. **The state calls them "Guest Workers"**. They have higher daily wages (Rs. 650-850) in unorganised sector, than in any other state, best medical facilities. And their children get quality education. Since the lockdown was declared, all the workers in Kerala from other states were looked after with all

schemes and the environment. In this way Kerala has created history.

Let me conclude with a quote from Nalini Singh: "There is no evidence that the PMO, cabinet secretariat and various ministries had started implementing an orderly evacuation of susceptible populations from the cities (COVID-19 hotspots) since January, but 12 weeks later when the first precipitate action of the March 24 lockdown happened, it fell like a guillotine on India's aspirational poorest who had almost no chance of infecting others. And, now the same migrants are being wooed back. Who devised the irrational



Migrant workers and members of their families line up outside a New Delhi bus terminal hoping to board a bus for their villages. Millions have lost their ability to earn an income because of the government-imposed lockdown aimed at limiting the spread of the coronavirus. **Bhuvan Bagga/AFP via Getty Images, npr.org.**



Migrant workers and their families in a bus terminal. **Bhuvan Bagga/AFP via Getty Images, npr.org.**

employment owing to lockdown and he was suffering from leg injury. Jyoti decided to take her father to their village home, 1200 kms away from Delhi. She bought a cycle for Rs. 500 and cycled six days even at night with

Take the case of a state which has inherited the legacy of the Buddha and many eminent leaders and statesmen - Bihar. It has the largest number of outgoing migrant workers, next to Uttar Pradesh. But, when the

was the decision of the government of Bihar? The state government was not in favour of migrant workers working in other states coming back to their home state. But now, more than 30 lakh workers have returned in spite of

their rights and privileges, by the local self-governments, women's organisations and the officials. According to the "Guest Workers", they are safer in Kerala because of their employment, food, accommodation, welfare

scheme? Who approved it? Who will unmask the truth? (**Indian Express**, June 20,2020)

The citizens, in this people oriented vibrant democracy, are waiting to hear the answers to these questions .

Fourth World Day of the Poor

Message of Pope Francis

"Stretch forth your hand to the poor"

>>> **Contd. from Page 1 Col. 4**

poorest and most contemptible, is made in the image of God. From this awareness comes the gift of God's blessing, drawn by the generosity we show to the poor. Time devoted to prayer can never become an alibi for neglecting our neighbour in need. In fact the very opposite is true: the Lord's blessing descends upon us and prayer attains its goal when accompanied by service to the poor.

3. How timely too, for ourselves, is this ancient

teaching! Indeed, the word of God transcends space and time, religions and cultures. **Generosity that supports the weak, consoles the afflicted, relieves suffering and restores dignity to those stripped of it, is a condition for a fully human life.** The decision to care for the poor, for their many different needs, cannot be conditioned by the time available or by private interests, or by impersonal pastoral or social projects. The power of God's grace cannot be restrained by the selfish tendency to put ourselves always first.

Keeping our gaze fixed on the poor is difficult, but more necessary than ever if we are to give proper direction to our personal life and the life of society. It is not a matter of fine words but of a concrete commitment inspired by divine charity. Each year, on the World Day of the Poor, I reiterate this basic truth in the life of the Church, for the poor are and always will be with us to help us welcome Christ's presence into our daily lives (cf. Jn 12:8).

4. Encountering the poor and

those in need constantly challenges us and forces us to think. How can we help to eliminate or at least alleviate their marginalization and suffering? How can we help them in their spiritual need? The Christian community is called to be involved in this kind of sharing and to recognize that it cannot be delegated to others. **In order to help the poor, we ourselves need to live the experience of evangelical poverty. We cannot feel "alright" when any member of the human family is left behind and in the shadows.** The

silent cry of so many poor men, women and children should find the people of God at the forefront, always and everywhere, in efforts to give them a voice, to protect and support them in the face of hypocrisy and so many unfulfilled promises, and to invite them to share in the life of the community.

**Continuation
In The Next Issue**

Corona In Lime Light As A Subject and An Object

David Pothirajulu

Let me take the privilege of raising certain questions, to the eminent writers and versatile readers, of articles, in the People's Reporter, as one associated with the fortnightly for 3 decades and who has seen its abundant fruitfulness. I ask, what happens to the vital observations made by the resourceful writers in the People's Reporter? Do we just read and forget? Or feel helpless? Should we identify cases of grassroot level issues of reality that need to be pursued further in search of Justice and Peace? What if it spreads from person to person? What if it has reached community transmission level?!

I seek to develop the understanding of the issue using the image of CORONA as 1. 'CORONA brought to light' and 2. what CORONA itself has brought to light.!

So I call it a SUBJECT that acts according to the programming it has in nature. And OBJECT that yields itself for further evaluation of Human Life, because of its presence.

All what the Governments and Health personnel are facing come from CORONA THE

All what has come to light because of the presence of CORONA, brings a CHALLENGE to humanity to set its house in order. The list of justice-issues will be endless. Nevertheless, we need to make a beginning. We start where CORONA points its finger to.

SUBJECT that acts on you which you have to combat to protect life.

All what has come to light because of the presence of CORONA, brings a CHALLENGE to humanity to set its house in order. The list of justice-issues will be endless. Nevertheless, we need to make a beginning. We start where CORONA points its finger to.

In this analysis, I borrow from two articles, published in the People's Reporter of recent issues, pointing out a social evil of a mega dimension – 'universal' if you like.

One is Bishop Duleep de Chickera (People's Reporter, MAY 10) who speaks about the "Indulgence of the World's Rich". The other Dr. M. A. Oommen, an internationally renowned economist who brings out the disparity among the rich and the poor, subtly pin pointing to the cause, (People's Reporter June 10) says that: "There is certainly something deeply unfair about the world's poor paying for the past and present



The Rt. Rev. Dr. David Pothirajulu is former Deputy Moderator of the Church of South India and former Bishop in the CSI Diocese of Madurai-Ramnadu

indulgence of the world's rich". He adds, "The obscene hike in the salaries of top business executives, sports stars etc., is legitimized on the basis of merit. Should 'winners' take all?"

Here I would like to narrow down and elaborate on systems in Games & Sports as brought to light by CORONA. Sports and Games have their own world of structures, systems and culture having their own 'Empire' as a regime universal. We want to stress that it has close relationships in the functioning, to the Pandemic of covid-19!! The citizens of the Empire are world over and they have accepted norms which may or may not be answerable to ethical standards for human living.

The characteristics of the regime has come to stay having received concurrence of the whole world.

To substantiate my arguments, I would like to quote extensively, rather than paraphrase statements, lest it should lose its savour:

Here is an innocent confession, a first hand witness of Scott Musa: "it's super bowl weekend — a time when friends and family gather around televisions all over the country to cheer on their favorite football team. Inevitably, there will be fans in attendance who get a little rowdy: screaming, jumping up and down, cheering. One wonders how it has become part of a culture among nations, cutting across variations and how humans have it as an inheritance."

While the above example refers to the experience of individuals, it is astonishing to learn how mass participations can be seen as a matter of routine!

The Guardian Weekly reports: "On 19 February, 2,500 Valencia soccer fans mixed with 40,000 Atalanta supporters from Bergamo in Italy for a champions league game in Milan which Giorgio Gori, Mayor of Bergamo, has described as "the bomb" which exploded the virus in Lombardy. In Spain, Valencia

players, fans and sports journalists were among the first to fall ill."

There is further description of the mass culture in the report. "The main reason for the quick spread through Spain may be completely mundane. It has been an unusually mild, sunny spring. In late February and early March, with temperatures above 20c (68f), Madrid's pavement cafes and bars were heaving with happy folk, doing what *madriños* like best — being sociable. That means hugging, kissing and animated chatter just a few inches from someone else's face, which Corona forbids today as a check from the nature."

We want to point out further, that it is not just cultural but how commercial and unethical elements have got into this phenomenon called "sports & games" which started with "keep fit" formula for every body, by the YMCAs and the YWCAs.

A most serious kind of cancerous growth in this celebrated Empire is that it serves also as a venue for unjust practices.

Footballers speak out on addiction: "Lars Bohinen enjoyed eight years in the Premier league and played alongside Lundekvam at international level for Norway."

He told CNN, "There is far more addiction among top-flight players than people see. He said: "you could sense it from the way they gambled."

I refer to two more accounts that need our consideration having read Dr. M. A. Oommen's remark "the obscene hike in the salaries of topsports stars"

Average player salary in the EPL 2019/20, by team published by DavidLange, Feb 25, 2020.

During the 2019/2020 Football Season, Manchester city paid the highest average annual player salary out of all teams in the English Premier League (EPL), with an average of roughly 8.73 million U.S. dollars. (more than Rs. 60 crore) Manchester United was the highest paying club in the EPL

Here is another account - Account 2.

The average weekly wage for a premier league player has risen above £50,000 (more than Rs. 60 crores) for the first time, says a new study.

Dr. Oommen would ascribe the status of the world's poor to the imbalance in distribution for which the rich do subscribe. Hence his assertion: He further observes that policies are made in preference to the rich, there is certainly something deeply unfair about the world's poor paying for the past and present indulgence of the world's rich".

We are concerned about the pandemic character of games-culture that has inherent evils which should be addressed.

Auctioneering: The BCCI on Friday, December 13, released the complete list of players to go under the hammer at the IPL 2020 Auction. From the initial list of 997 players, a total of 332 players were marked out for the IPL 2020 Auction on December 19 in Kolkata. There were six more last-minute additions to the list only hours before the auction on Thursday.

*Among Indian players, Robin Uthappa is the costliest, with a base price of INR 1.5 crore.

To put the evil of auctioneering in a nutshell:

"The auctioneer is generally not the seller but the agents of the goods (i.e. the players) and the whole system indulges in illegal activity, i.e. sale of human/people in open bidding / auction etc. on national T.V. channels and through different media modes. Along with goods sold (i.e. the players) the agents are getting huge money, which is more than 1 Rs. 1,000 crore, and also International Currency abroad, and is a big source of money laundering etc. and in making a huge gap of rich and poor and accumulating money through this illegal act of human bidding, selling and auctioning etc." Comes from a pleader for censoring auctioneering.

*(The Delhi high court did not uphold it and no further appeal made.)

The role of World YMCA and YWCA: What Corona has brought to light is the scenario I have brought before you following the magnificent event at Milan. Does it not call for a mission of the church? A programme demanding justice, a ministry of Prophetic Diakonia?!

In my opinion, the world YMCA and the YWCA, people who talk about the integration of body mind and soul can care for it because of their historical association with people and organisations of Sports and Games with the objectives of promoting mental health, physical fitness and spiritual development.

Would the present leadership in the world YMCA and YWCA consider it as a challenge to humanity to have a new breath?

Last but not least is the need to ask some awkward questions which may even sound like irrational questions: "Do we need Olympics to decide on a world championship? How much Air Travel it demands and how much fuel it consumes? Not to mention other undesirable elements attached to it. Can there be an evaluation on this and a move towards a counter culture that would entail more significant components in it?!

God bless us with a newness of life.

Persecution at Kenduguda, Odisha



A 14 year old Christian boy, Samaru Madkani, was murdered in cold blood by a group of religious fanatics in the East-Indian state of Odisha.

"On the night of 4th June, 2020, a few villagers ganged up with a handful of religious fanatics who are not a part of their village, and attempted to kidnap 3 Christians", said Pastor Bijay, who serves in Malkangiri. Two Christians who were stronger and older than the victim managed to escape. Unfortunately, young Samaru

Madkani was left behind at the mercy of his assailants who brutally slayed the grade 7 student and chopped his body into pieces. After carrying out this gruesome crime, the assassins buried the body and fled from the scene.

The incidence took place in a village named Kenduguda which is located in Mudulipada, a tehsil in Malkangiri. Samaru Madkani was the son of Unga Madkani, an Elder who serves in the Bethel House Church, a ministry headed by Pastor Bijay Pusuru. Samaru had lost his mother at a very young age and was being raised by his father.

Christians in this village have been facing many threats and are being continually harassed by religious fanatics.

Last month, in a shocking series of horrific events, religious fanatics stuffed 3 Christians into jute bags, tied them up and tried to throw them into the river. In another incident, the religious goons attempted to set two Christians ablaze! All these attacks took place in the same area.

As per the FIR, filed by Unga Madkani, the victim and his father had adopted Christianity 3 years ago. Since then, a few of the villagers have been harassing them. On 04/06/2020, at night, a few villagers picked up Samaru telling him that he needed to attend a meeting in the jungle. Within an hour, the fanatics returned to pick up Unga too. The accused had knives and other weapons, and were threatening to kill him. They forcibly tried to kidnap him too, but he managed to escape and headed straight to the police station and made a complaint.

— Sources: Persecution Relief, Local News, Premaya, 7.6. '20

Art for Healing and Solidarity in the Covidosphere

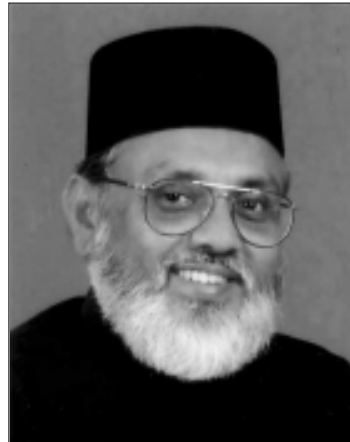
K. M. George

One of the striking paradoxes we observe during the long 'Covidemic' lockdown is that when most human activities stopped or slowed down the non-human nature flourished. When millions of motor vehicles emitting heat and carbon disappeared from our roads, birds broke forth into singing to wake up human beings in megacities like New York. When industrial dust and smoke settled, the atmosphere became so clear that people had the exciting experience of viewing mountain chains like the Himalayas from far off places.

This is an eye opener. It proves once again the long lost

cry of poets, artists, ecologists, futurologists, philosophers and all lovers of nature that all life on earth is fast moving to the point of total annihilation because of the irresponsible human behavior. But planners and politicians, 'progressists' and profit-seekers turned a deaf ear.

Artists across the globe turned anew to nature, the inexhaustible source for all life, for insight and inspiration in the Covid crisis. There has been enormous creativity in the field of art, particularly painting, sculpture and music during the lockdown when artists worked and exhibited online individually and in groups. Many of them responded to the new human



Fr. Dr. K. M. George is former Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches and former Principal of The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Seminary at Kottayam, Kerala

predicament through their creative productions. Their

works contain in varying degrees prophetic, therapeutic, critical, consolatory and apocalyptic elements as well as sanguine visions of a new heaven and new earth and a social order exemplifying justice, peace and the interconnectedness of all life.

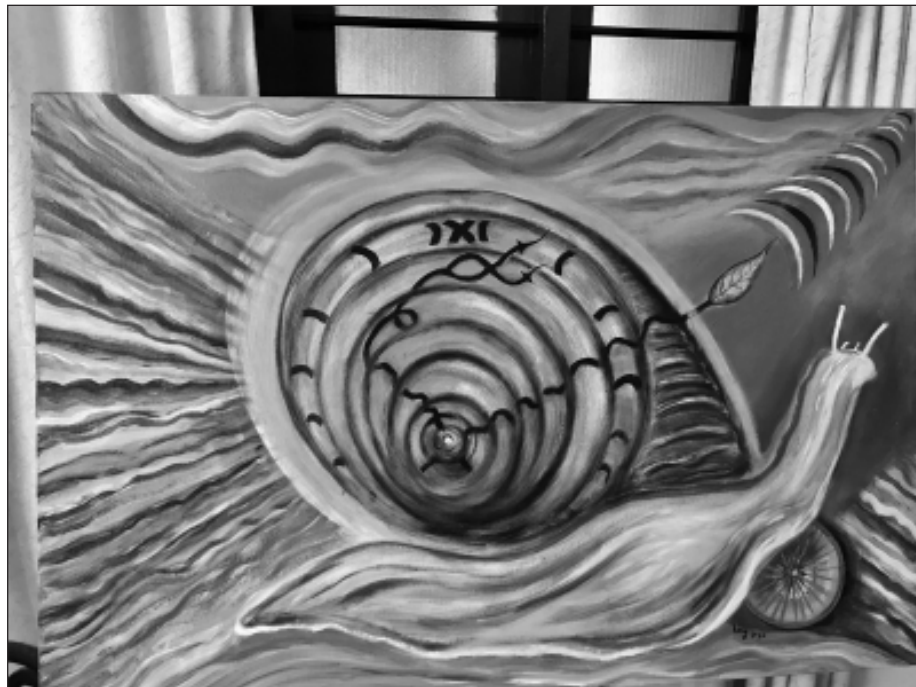
Art communicates far more deeply and effectively than verbal and discursive theology. A lot of verbal fights on doctrine in the history of the Church had been seriously divisive of the Body of Christ and created centuries-old hostility between Christians. The theological word-fight (*logomachia*) as it was satirically put by one of the most respected Christian theologians

of antiquity, Gregory of Nazianzus) ignored the metaphorical, parabolic and other figurative dimensions of human language. The linguistic literalism lacked all aesthetic sense. It simply didn't take into account that 'Jesus always spoke in parables, and without parable he didn't teach anything'.

As kindly requested by the Editor, let me present to you three of the seven modest paintings done during the lockdown. They try to convey some aspects of the human condition at the global level. (Please bear with us if black and white prints of the paintings do not represent fully what is described below):

The Snail O' Clock

This is a totally symbolic work. A giant snail's shell is the face of a clock in a cosmic setting. But the needles don't follow the regular course. One of them jumps out of the frame of the clock and tries to point to the cosmic time of night and day repeated endlessly. There the metallic-mechanical needle becomes the leaf of a Bodhi tree, the tree associated with the Buddha's enlightenment. The other needle, twisted on itself, goes round in a cyclic manner first, but finally forks into two needles making the shape of the symbol of Infinity (∞). So the Roman digits on the face of the clock, that are supposed to mark time, become empty of meaning without the two needles that ran away. Even the regular Roman digit XII on top of the dial is ambiguous. Since the 1 stands on both sides of the X we can't make any sense of IXI. If you insist on making some sense it can be 11 minus 1 or



9 plus 1. Taken in itself the clock shows the absurdity of our time and history. (Some devout Christians may see here the scene of the crucifixion of Christ, an event that

lends meaning to history!)

The snail that has come out of the shell is considered the epitome of slowness. It's '*slug-gishness*' is universally deplored by us moderns in our age of the adoration of speed. Our current technology is seeking speedier and speedier ways of conquering time and space from Wi-Fi to space travel. (The irony is that the Corona virus has travelled globally by air by means of our speediest vehicle, the airplane, -space shuttles apart-, and consequently all aircrafts had to be grounded). The snail with its powerful sensors discerns the hazy future and quietly moves into it on the wheel of Dharma (*Dharma chakra*) with all that it implies for a new ethics and conduct of life and radically different order of the world. Ever since the invention of the wheel, considered as a revolutionary transition point for human civilization, our world has been moving on the wheel of ever new technology.

The Sunset

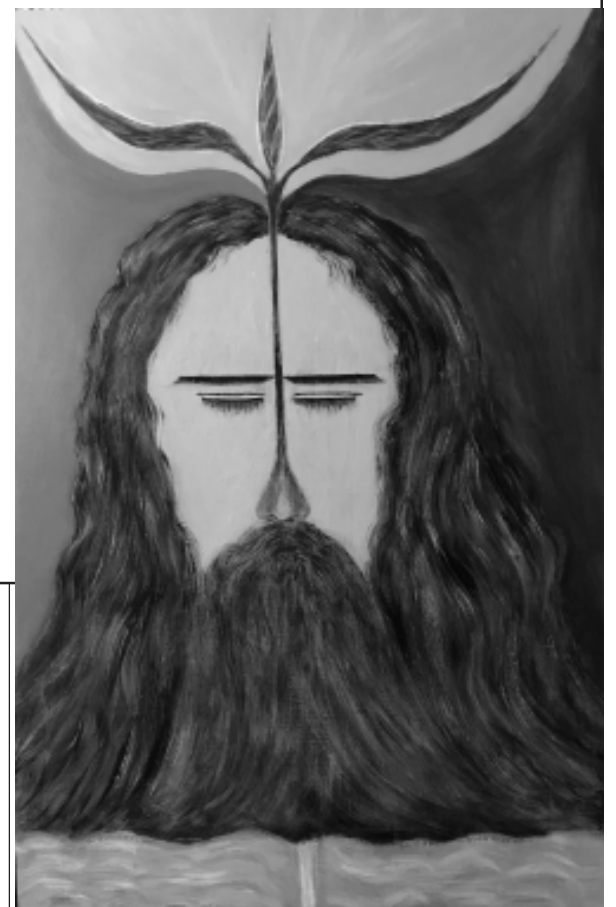


A rather dismal scenario of a future city, sort of ghost city. Symbolically, it is the sunset of our great urban civilization. Actually, this work is not a flat painting as seen in the picture. The background with splendid colours of a sunset is painted on a flat canvas. But the tall ruined skyscrapers, relics of a glorious past, are real rotten tree bark taken from different logs of old wood. So the work looks projected and three-dimensional. There is a white church building, equally ruined, in the middle. In several western cities like New York one can still see very old cathedrals, once the tallest buildings in the city, but now dwarfed by surrounding skyscrapers. The colourful sunset is always there, even when all human construction and civilization rise and fall. Nature remains unperturbed.

The Blessed Medicinal Plant

In the ancient Syriac liturgical text attributed to St James of Jerusalem Jesus is called "*the Blessed Plant (Root)*" that by its sweet fragrance dispelled the bad odour of evil and brought healing to all. This idea inspired the painting. The plant (root) actually rises from beyond the very foundation of the world, and its two leaves are stretched out to heaven like arms interceding for the whole world. The theme is inspired by the pervasive *Covidophobia* and the desperate search for healing and wholeness.

(Fr. Dr. K. M. George is member of a team of artists called CARP - Company of Artists for Radiating Peace. As part of their commitment to peace-building through art they conduct free art workshops for school children. In this article some words like *covidosphere*, *covidemic* and *covidophobia* are newly coined, assuming that they are self-explanatory).



Interreligious Dialogue:

Superficial and Substantial

Israel Selvanayagam

There has been a growing trend to repeat slogans in connection with interreligious dialogue. Generally, they are on the lines of 'One God and One Humanity in the Midst of Diversity'. From children-rhymes to protocol speeches of politicians and diplomats, such slogans have become casual and popular. When they are repeated in interreligious meetings and dialogues, they sound more fashionable and fascinating. But beyond the fact of common humanity, people with commitment, integrity and openness, do not hide deep wounds and contradictions. To distinguish between plurality and contradiction and to make life better for all, they would insist on a basic love of truth and commitment to truthfulness.

Affirming diversity without recognising contradiction would leave us one-eyed. In one interreligious meeting a participant showed his palm and pointed the five fingers which were of different lengths. The speaker in response said, 'The fingers are rooted in the same base and are nurtured by equal flow of blood. But in actual life, you like black and white TV and I

Often superficial slogans are put forward with a hidden agenda to hide the deviations and distortions of the primary and original vision of one's religious tradition. Even when we do not have absolute answers for the perennial problems, interreligious friends' groups may start with empirical questions and offer provisional answers. We may well decide to start not with approaches to the unknown destinations, but life here and now, affected by our visions of reality.

like colour, but if I have both and you have none, that is contradiction. And so on.' In further conversation, it was pointed out that there is so much of goodness around, but poverty, untouchability, corruption, injustice, oppression of the weak cannot be part of diversity, but contradiction. Is there any way to reconcile the belief in *karma* and pre-destination and awareness to see the new possibility for change? If there is no room for asking this question, interreligious dialogue too is a casualty of superficial slogans. Starting and closing the meetings with prayer does not change its character!

Religions hold different visions of reality or of God. **Efforts to know at least the basics of other religions would exercise the mind, challenge the conscience and enhance dialogue.** But one may leap into repeating the slogan that all religions are essentially the same and they signify diversity.



The Rev. Dr. Israel Selvanayagam is former Principal of United Theological College, Bangalore

What is that essence that binds all people, that inspires them to do good and evil? The ancient religious visionaries of India had the courage to raise questions and conceive answers. For example, when millions of gods and goddesses were part of a ritual-centred Vedic vision such as Gautama Buddha and Mahaveera ridiculed it and affirmed the interior sacred power as greater than ritual

power and denied the existence of one creator-God. Therefore, they cannot be included in the 'One God, One Humanity' slogan. Later, the Semitic traditions brought to the sub-continent new visions and values. At what level of this enriching proved to be positive and were the moments and causes of tension, may stimulate questions for understanding the difference between diversity and contradiction in India today.

Often superficial slogans are put forward with a hidden agenda to hide the deviations and distortions of the primary and original vision of one's religious tradition. Even when we do not have absolute answers for the perennial problems, interreligious friends' groups may start with empirical questions and offer provisional answers. We may well decide to start not with approaches to the unknown destinations, but life here and now, affected by our visions of reality. Dialogue on

ultimate goals and its impact on proximate goals, is not an unreasonable pursuit if the participants of interreligious dialogue are genuinely committed. The preparedness of a religious community for such dialogue will reveal its courage and clarity. For Christians, what will be revealed is Faith or lack of it as per the astonishing teachings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.

If there is an informed change from a superficial level to a substantial level of interreligious dialogue one may expect fruitful conversations and effective collaboration. As there is no community without some kind of religion, the contribution of religions to world peace and civilization is extremely significant. To start with, the very meaning of civilization, and its authentic expression in today's post-truth world of wars and conflicts, need to be defined by interreligious friends. We are not going to achieve anything in one sitting; we need to have sustained dialogues. We cannot remain scratching but we have to move deeper. And such exercises will not turn explosive as long as we 'speak the truth in love.'

COVID Relief Work

COVID Pandemic has caused havoc in the lives of innumerable human beings. The Rt. Rev. Dr. J. George Stephen, Bishop in the CSI Diocese of Madras, gave a call to the Church to reach out to those affected by COVID-19. Touched by the extreme sufferings of the people, as a result of the Pandemic, we started serving the poor and the needy.

The leaders of the CSI Wesley English Church, St. Thomas Mount, chose the main church and its branch Church, CSI Paraniputhur Wesley Church as two operational centers. A third operational centre, for the relief work was at a Private Church in Iyyapanthangal. We began the work of rescuing the perishing,

and caring for the dying.

From the Centre at the Mount every day, we cooked, packed and distributed food to the homeless and contract workers without jobs. From the Centre at Paraniputhur we started distributing Vegetables, Bread, Plantain, Rice, Wheat flour and other provision items. Here the reach was mostly to the Hindi migrant workers numbering about 2500 to 3000 families.

Seeing the mammoth relief work among all, irrespective of Caste, Community and Religion, people from other faiths came forward and gifted their provision items to the Poor through the Church.

Though started in a small way, it reached unimaginable proportions.

Funds started flowing in from Church worshippers, friends of school groups & Colony groups, Clients, Kith and Kin and friends from different parts of the Globe.

This gave us the much needed confidence to go on and on. Without break of a single day, we have been doing it continuously for 69 days as on 15 June. Slowly, we expanded our reach. We were able to extend our helping hands to twenty odd blind families and the inmates of a mentally challenged home in Chennai. Relief materials were provided to a mission organization working among the blind people. With continuous lockdown for several weeks of Private Churches, there was an urge amongst us to serve the Poor Pastors and mission

workers as well. 80 odd mission workers were provided with relief items and food. We were able to reach huge numbers of Narikuravas, Irular Community and Transgender as well.

As we were well supported by many friends, we enlarged our boundaries in serving in a small way through missionary friends in Mumbai, Godchorolli, Chattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat and Kashmir.

Through this relief effort, we also shared God's love and faithfulness to all those who received our help. Many lives were transformed as they tasted the love of their creator.

The mammoth contributions made by sacrificial souls in feeding the Poor and the needy

have become a life time investment in the lives of innumerable souls.

The COVID-19 relief work has given the Church a very great opportunity to look way beyond. New boundaries were conquered far and wide. The acts of the Church have become a great witness to the outside world.

— Reported by Livingstone J Nallathambi

(Mr. Livingstone J Nallathambi, a Chartered Accountant, is the Convener of the COVID Relief Work and the Secretary of CSI Wesley English Church, St. Thomas Mount, Diocese of Madras. Ph: 9840089909)



Feeding the hungry



423

Mammen Varkey

"..... Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Matthew 28:16-20 (RSV)

The third part or aspect or dimension of the Risen Master's long, deep and intense interaction with the eleven disciples who went to the mountain in Galilee to meet him, was an **'assurance'**. Jesus said to them, "..... lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Matt. 28:20. Just prior to this, he had called them to 'go and make disciples of all nations'

and 'to be his witnesses to the end of the earth'. Acts. 1:8. Now, he assured them that he would be with them **'always'**, in all the endeavours of theirs.

With all the disciples of all times

The 'eleven' had been selected by Jesus during the early phase of his public ministry 'to be with him'. Mark 3:14. Now,

the Risen Master assured them that he would be with them. Not only all through their lives but also **'always, to the close of the age'**. It was a clear proclamation that he would be with all the disciples of all times, till the end of the age.

Definitely, a greater mission

What had happened in history was that though the eleven had been selected 'to be with him', all of them had run away, when their Master was caught, persecuted and crucified, when they were certain that he would not be with them. They all ran away when they thought that he would not be 'available' for them! "Then, all the disciples, forsook him and fled". Matt. 26:56, Mark 14:50. But the Risen Master, ignoring totally their forsaking him and running away, and fully forgiving all of them, went back to them and entrusted them with the mission afresh. **Definitely, a greater historic mission.**

Sent out to all people

When they were sent out first, they were told, "Go nowhere among the gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but

go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 10:5 & 6. But now amazingly, the Risen Lord sent them out to all people of all castes, races, nations etc. and assured them all, of his accompanying and presence with them **'always'**. Matt. 28:20.

We need to have a profound understanding, perhaps a re-understanding, of the assurance given by the Risen Lord.

1. Will radically transform our faith

Mark narrates, "..... the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen." Mark 16:19 & 20 (RSV).

Luke records, "Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God." Luke 24:50-52 (RSV).

In the Acts of the Apostles it is written, ***"And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight."*** Acts 1:9.

A quick, casual reading of these verses would give the message to the readers that the Risen Lord is residing, abiding, from that time onwards, in Heaven, along with 'God, the Father'. But the verse that we are reflecting on, the verse Matthew 28:20, unequivocally proclaims that he is with all his disciples, of all times, with us all.

The Risen Lord assures us that he is with us 'always', in our successes and sufferings, in our achievements and failures, in our sincere efforts 'to be with him' and even in our 'fleeing away'.

This understanding will radically transform our faith. Also life. The faith in the Risen Christ who is ever with us, will give us a new life in all its dimensions.

To be continued

The Gospel of Mary !

Do not remain ignorant of church's history and heritage

>>> Contd. from Page 2 Col. 4

As a historian King digs into the religious and cultural contexts within which the Gospel of Mary was written and then disappeared. No one thought of making copies of it and keep it in circulation. According to her, the early Christians were divided into two groups namely, the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians. The Greeks, the Romans and other ethnic converts formed the Gentile Christian church and brought along with them their religious, social, philosophical and cultural elements and practices into the church and it became a controversial issue between the Jewish and Gentile converts.

Mary addresses Jesus as the Saviour. She not only met the Risen Lord but keeps conversing with him in her visions. Jesus who inaugurates the "Realm of Salvation" in his death and resurrection is the focus of her Gospel and his teachings form the core of her Gospel. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the centre of Christian belief and practice and the occasion for the preaching ministry and mission of the disciples. In Jesus, Mary locates both the

The Gospel of Mary challenges us to follow the 'Saviour', the 'Risen Lord', the 'Child of New Humanity', to absorb his teachings and to develop a sense of Christian ethics and moral obligation towards the God of Life and Love, and neighbours respecting their humanity irrespective of caste, creed and ethnicity.

teacher and "the mediator of divine revelation and salvation".

Karen King provides English translations of these 'finds': the Coptic and the Greek transcripts with the photo prints of the original documents, (pp.13-28).The Gospel presents an interesting and challenging dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. Peter asks "What is the sin of the world"? The Saviour replies "There is no such thing as sin; rather you yourself are what produces sin when you act in accordance with the nature of adultery, which is called sin. For this reason the Good came among you, pursuing (the good) which belongs to every nature. It will set it within its root." (pp. 13) "Then he continued." He said, "This is why you get si(c)k and die; because (you love) what de(c)ei(ve)s (you)....That is why I told you, 'become content at heart'.... (14). When the Blessed One had said these things, he greeted them all. "Peace be with you!" he said. "Acquire my peace within yourselves!" He warned them saying "Be careful that no

one misguides you by saying "Look over there" or "Look over here!" For the Child of New Humanity exists within you. Follow it!Go then, preach the good news about the Realm. (Do) not lay down any rule beyond what I determined for you, nor promulgate law like the lawgiver or else you might be dominated by it." (pp.14) Saying thus, Jesus departed from them. The disciples were scared and did not know how to respond to Jesus' command "Go and preach". "How are we going to announce the good news about the Realm of the child of true Humanity?" (pp. 14) **Mary got up and said, "Have courage and his grace will protect you." And remember, "He has prepared us and made us true Human beings." (pp. 15)**

King tells that the four gospels, Acts, the letters and the book of Revelation did not face any measuring rod that came into existence in the form of Nicene Creed and rules of Orthodoxy. Some of the early Christian writings were rejected because

they seemed to be influenced by Gnostic religion but there was no Gnostic religion in that period. Early Christianity got divided into Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism. The scholars invented the term Gnosticism to categorise various heresies in the ancient church. Jewish Christians observed too much of 'Judaism' while Gnosticism had little regard for it. So the scholars invented the category of Orthodoxy which rejects "Jewish error" and accepts their Scripture as its own. (155).This typology became the criteria for defining what would be the "normative Christian identity". (155) King asserts that the "Historical Mary

of Magdala was a prominent follower of Jesus, a visionary and a leading apostle." (154)

The Gospel of Mary challenges us to follow the 'Saviour', the 'Risen Lord', the 'Child of New Humanity', to absorb his teachings and to develop a sense of Christian ethics and moral obligation towards the God of Life and Love and neighbours respecting their humanity irrespective of caste, creed and ethnicity.

The Gospel of Mary along with the Gospel of Judas and the Gospel of Thomas, the Apocryphon of John, the Sophia of Jesus Christ and the Acts of Peter need to become a part of our theological education to help our priests, pastors and congregations not remain ignorant of church's history and heritage in regard to non-canonised Christian writings.

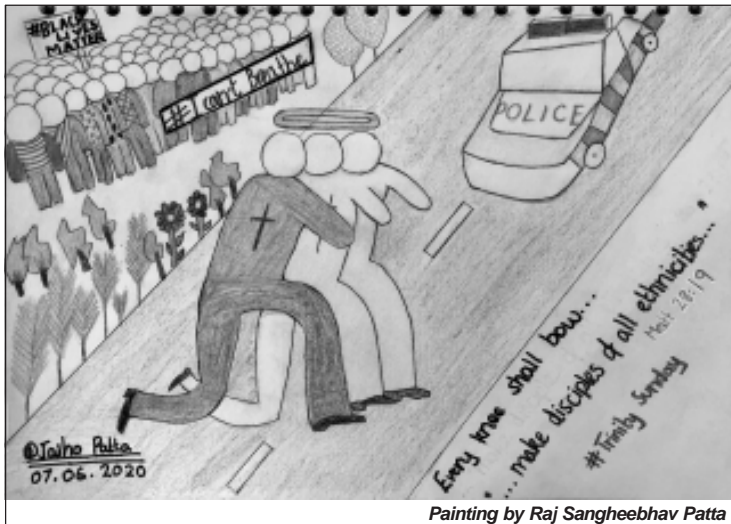


No Need To PANIC About PANDEMIC

Black Lives Matter

Every knee shall bow

Raj Bharath Patta



Painting by Raj Sangheebhav Patta

Every knee shall bow

In weeping for George Floyd who lost his breath

Every knee shall bow

In protest against the knees of prejudice that put him to death

Every knee shall bow

In repentance for white supremacy whose oxygen is discriminations

Every knee shall bow

In solidarity with those protestors demanding justice in 'this-crime-nation'

Every knee shall bow

In defiance of the oppressive status quos in the society

Every knee shall bow

In respect for those who dream and strive for equality

Every knee shall bow

In support of Black people who are beautifully made in God's equal image

Every knee shall bow

In giving up our privilege and identifying with the powerless in our global village

Every knee shall bow

In anger at the silence of people in the face of injustice now

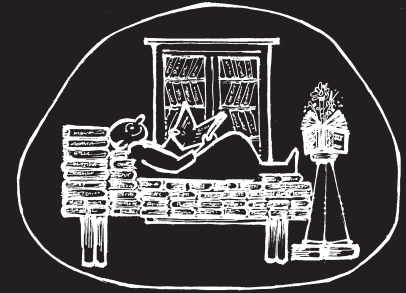
Every knee shall bow

In prayer for peace, for equity, for justice, for action, for forgiveness, for grace and for love.

[Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta, a Lutheran minister from AELC, is currently serving as a Recognised and Regarded Minister of the Methodist Church at the United Stockport Circuit in UK.]

No Furniture is
so charming as books

– Sydney Smith



Christian Conference of Asia

Racism and inequality anywhere in the world are threats to humanity

“The brutal murder and ongoing atrocities perpetrated against African Americans and other marginalised communities of colour in the United States of America by police are alarming. The subsequent response unleashed through massive protest movements across the country are clear evidences of frustration which became the catalyst around which the American public galvanised to pour out their outrage against social inequality, police brutality, and racism”, said the General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Dr. Mathews George Chunakara in a statement released on 17 June.

Condemning the police brutality and murders of two African Americans, George Floyd in Minneapolis and Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, USA as well as the destructive acts of protesters in different parts of the country, the CCA General Secretary said, “Economic oppression and political repression have no place in a democracy. Such virulent bigotry is contrary to any sense of human



Source: "Des Moines Protests George Floyd Murder" accessed from Wikimedia Commons

decency. To solve a problem, we must first recognise that a problem exists.”

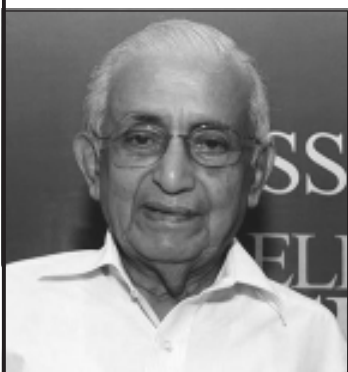
“Those who strike against people because of their colour are striking against God who created all human beings in the image of God. We need to recognise the divine presence in each and every one God created and respect their dignity and integrity regardless of colour, ethnicity, national origin, or social status. This disorienting dilemma is a teaching moment for all those who are concerned of humanity.” the statement continued.

According to UN News, more than 600 rights groups called for an investigation into police violence after George Floyd's death. And as anti-racism protests have emerged around the world, U. N Human Rights Council President, Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, stressed that the issue was universal.

“As demonstrations spread all over the world, this is a topic that is not about just one country, it goes well beyond that”, said the President of the UNHRC.

– CCA News

Justice Hosbet Suresh passes away



Justice Hosbet Suresh (91), a friend of the movements and a firm advocate for human rights, passed away on 11 June 2020. It is a terrible loss for the human rights movements. Justice Suresh was one of the few retired judges relentless in the pursuit of human rights, who was approachable and giving, to whom one could go for support and advice anytime and who would never refuse to stand for truth and justice.

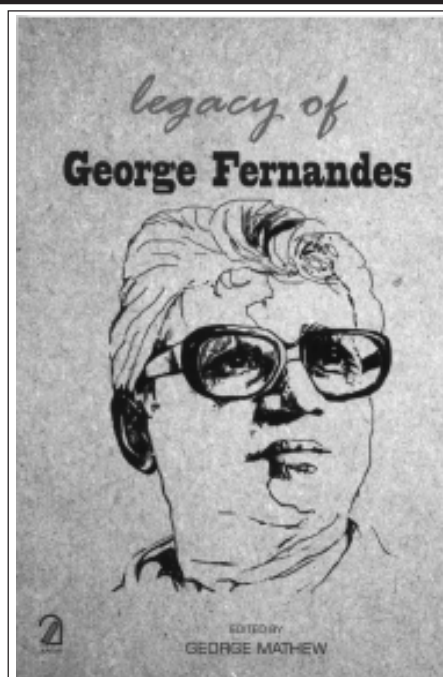
In the last few years, in spite of his failing health, he worked on several commissions. Last year I went to his place to invite him for a press conference we had organised to release the PUCI booklet titled 'Dismantling rights through systematic policy dilutions'. His health was not the best and I

wasn't sure if he would agree to come. He was however enthusiastic and happily agreed. After going through the book, he said it was a very important document and we should not take the policy dilutions lightly, they were part of a larger plan. He recounted some of the difficult missions he was part of. He warned, “All the communal and socio-economic attacks through policy are attempts to obliterate Dr. Babasaheb's constitution in which we take pride. It is our duty to protect it and without it we would cease to be a democracy.”

Most of all, he has been a source of hope when judicial activism is at a low. At a time like this, we need him more than ever. He remains with us in the massive inspirational and historical works he leaves behind, a testament to civil rights advocacy and activism. And in our hearts. Thank you, Justice Suresh. May we be able to continue the fight like you did, unflinching till the very end.

– Reported by Lara Jesani, [Adv. Lara Jesani is a Human Rights Lawyer practising in Bombay High Court. He is Core-Committee member of People's Union for Civil Liberties, Maharashtra]

Legacy of George Fernandes



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The views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the editors.